

THE INTEREST to WOMEN

The Santa Claus Myth

Highest Authorities Agree to Let the Children Keep the Saint of Christmas.

"Twas the week before Christmas, and the nice, red coated, white whiskered Santa Claus stood on the street corner radiating happiness.

"Do the children believe in me?" he chuckled. "Why, sure. Aw! the little darlings. They think I'm real, all right. They laugh and wave their hands to me and— but you just stand over there and watch them."

"Sure enough. Above the roar of the elevated came a joyful shout:

"Sandy Claus! Sandy Claus!"

"He was only a tiny boy, delighted beyond all power to keep silent, and his beautiful little face was filled with a wonderful joy.

"Sandy Claus! Sandy Claus!" he shouted again, when the white whiskered man smiled and bowed and flung his bell more merrily than ever. The black velvet gown woman didn't stop, however, and the child trotted away looking backward every step or two and still beaming at Santa.

Next came a ragged little chap of perhaps eight years, carefully leading two young (and homelier) children.

"Shake hands with Santa Claus!" he advised, and two shy little hands were put out to the big man, who stooped over and took them gently, oh, very gently.

"Poor little duffers," he murmured. "Then as they passed on the boy looked back and winked, as much as to say 'Pretty good, the way we did that,' whereupon Santa rattled his jolly little bell some more. He never speaks. Children pull their arms around his neck and whisper in his ear for him to bring them a 'nice horse and a doll for my sister,' but Santa only nods his head knowingly.

"You'll get them," says the father or mother, and the child goes off smiling.

Now is this wrong?

"Lies! Lies!" says the Critical One. "No wonder we're a nation of fools, when children's minds are fed on nonsense like that."

The Tribune reporter sought the advice of experts, and in all the length and breadth of the city not an authority was found who would say a word against Santa Claus. There was the "Christmas Lady," Mrs. Kate Douglas Wiggin, author of "The Birds' Christmas Carol" and creator of adorable babies.

"Did Peter believe in Santa Claus?" she was asked.

"Most certainly," said she. "Mother Carey was a woman who would tell that story in the right way, and all the Carey children, even though they had outgrown their belief themselves, would keep up a merry, clever, elusive joking about it, just because they loved it so.

"But it takes the right kind of person to tell children about Santa Claus. The stupid, unimaginative people who insist on the cold facts, spoil it all. Oh, yes; they say, 'he comes right down this very chimney.' And the clever child finds out that the flue is too small. Then he knows his parents lied to him. One must be gay and mysterious about it. You just wait and see on Christmas if Santa hasn't been here." Or, "Well, I wonder now. Let's all keep still and wonder about it. You know it's always the prince who wonders in the fairy stories who finds the magic door in the mountain and learns the secrets of the castles."

There is a great difference, according to Mrs. Wiggin, between "telling children lies" and cultivating their imaginations, a difference which the realists, the "Gradgrinds" do not understand. Santa Claus belongs with the fairy stories, of which she says in her book, "The Story Hour":

"What the fairy tale carries us into an exquisite, ideal world where the fancy may roam at will, creating new images and seeing truth ever in new forms, then it has a pure and lovely influence over children, who are natural poets, and live more in the spirit and less in the body than we. Everything is real to the happy child. Life is a sort of fairy garden, where he wanders as in a dream."

Up at Teachers' College, where theories of the child blossom early in the season, long before the masses of mothers get them, they still cling to Santa Claus.

"Certainly, let the children believe in

him thoroughly," said Miss Grace Brown, director of the kindergarten; "but tell them nobody ever saw him; so it is of no use to stay awake watching for him. And the Santa Clauses on the street corners are not real Santa Clauses at all—they are only playing Santa Claus. Then tell the child he could play it, too, and give the baby a present. Everybody plays Santa Claus, father and mother and grandma, and everybody who loves us. When the child grows a little older he won't have any trouble in realizing that the real Santa Claus, after all, is just the people who love him."

Nine other kindergarten authorities in the city gave practically the same answer. Santa Claus is safe in the hands of the educators!

Well, then, what says a real father and mother—somebody with a nice, big, practical, common-sense Santa Claus theory? Madame Louise Homer! Just the person, with her four fine children, and a wee little Homer who came very near being a Christmas present this year.

"Oh, yes, we're old-fashioned. We all believe in Santa Claus," said Papa Homer, who does the talking for the family just now.

The twins were "resting" wide awake on their little beds when Papa and the reporter put the question direct to them. Katharine kicked up her small heels and squealed delightedly.

"Yes, Santa's coming very soon now, and I hope he brings us a tricycle, and we're going to the Christmas tree," Annie agreed.

Papa Sidney Homer has more ideas on the subject, however, for he is not only the proud father of five and husband of the prima donna, but a composer of music and is it proper to say "therefore" of poetic fancies.

"The children know," he says, "that all the presents come from the family, and after they're a bit older they will understand that Santa Claus is only a nice, jolly, red old fairy. I shall try to make them feel, too, that he is a symbol of the something above and beyond their money that buys Christmas presents or their parents who give them. It is the spirit of the whole world working together for happiness. Money alone did not procure their Christmas pleasures. Some lumberman up in the mountains cut down the Christmas tree for them, else they couldn't have bought it in New York. Somebody over in Germany made their toys for them, and somebody else made the nice candies they buy in the stores. Everybody in the world is doing things for everybody else, and at Christmas time we symbolize that relation in the figure of Santa Claus, because he is jolly and loving, like the Christmas spirit."

"Now, we'll go in and see Mimi. Homer and tell her what I've said."

So in we went, to a room where a lovely woman smiled at us, and said that was just what she thought, too, but she must warn son, aged nine, not to tell his little sisters there wasn't any Santa Claus. They were puzzled enough already between Santa Claus, who brings tricycles, and the Christmas angel who brought the baby.

Then out into the cold rain, away from those warm, rosy Homers, to seek a poetess—Alice Mary Buckton, author of the Christmas mystery play, "Eager Heart."

What did she think about Santa Claus?

"Oh, do you know," she cried, "we don't have Santa Claus in England? You have him on the street corners here? Why, I think that is charming. It is so like the pleasant old English mummings and waltzes that go about singing on Christmas night at home. These old folk plays can become one of the highest means of education, and Santa Claus and the saints should be classed with them. It is beautiful to have Santa Claus collect money for the poor, because that associates the idea of giving with him, rather than that of always getting, on Christmas. It is a pity if the holiday passes without rousing children's gentler feelings of love and pity for the little child who was born in the cold, dark manger on that first Christmas night, and through that to love and pity for all who are cold or sorrowful on Christmas Day."

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SOME USES FOR ALCOHOL.

A little alcohol here and there is excellent for cleaning smoky lamp chimneys, and varnish stains in glass, tile and marble will disappear with its use. Old paint stains, too, will often yield readily to alcohol when the white marks so often left on a varnished table after water has been spilled upon it can be taken out with alcohol. After putting the alcohol on the stain take care not to let it dry. A slight stickiness results which will disappear in a few minutes, but if touched or rubbed while sticky the surface will either be defaced or the varnish will come off. Small white marks on varnished furniture will sometimes come off if an ordinary rubber ink eraser is used.

MRS. KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN.
Who is sure the children in her books
all believe in Santa Claus.
(Photograph by Moffat.)



MME. LOUISE HOMER AND THE HOMER TWINS.
Who are looking for Santa Claus.
(Photograph by Moffat.)

VISIONS OF SANTA CLAUS DANCE IN THEIR HEADS.

"HELLO, SANTY CLAUS!"
The Volunteers of America on the street corners give color to the Christmas myth.



MISS ALICE MARY BUCKTON.
Author of the Christmas mystery play,
"Eager Heart," who thinks it a beautiful
custom to have Santa Clauses on
the streets.

A FETE DE NOEL

Quaint Juvenile Party Arranged for Christmas Week.

In Christmas week is to be given a very charming party, to which the small guests have been invited in French, and at which they are to wear miniature French court costumes of the period of Louis XIV. The young courtiers are asked from "4 until 8," and in the afternoon are to dance to quaint old French airs for an hour for the edification of the parents, who will be allowed to look on. A minute will be one of the surprises, and games will be played for another hour.

At 4 o'clock a supper will be served at a long table, where the decorations are planned in a fascinating way. Down the center old gilt épergnes and candelabra will alternate in a slightly irregular line, the épergnes filled with fruits and candies and the candelabra holding bayberry and the scarlet candles. Besides these, at intervals, dolls, with Dresden bodies and voluminous skirts of brocade, attended by miniature "ladies-in-waiting." Under their skirts will be concealed a string of gifts for each child, tied on a long ribbon, the end of which will trail over the table and tie to a small gilded staff at each child's place, the children, with a design of merriment, will wind the ribbon around his or her staff until a little package is brought to the plate. This is to be untied promptly and enjoyed, until the next time comes for winding in a gift.

As the children are all to be under ten years of age, the supper will be quite simple. The four courses are oranges served like grapefruit, bouillabaisse with bread and butter, chicken breast and stewed cold, cakes, and ice cream in Santa Claus shapes. After supper there will be music, and the children can dance again or play games until the time comes for departure.

At a formal afternoon tea, remarked the woman who keeps bachelor hall, as she put the little on and filled an oval plate with cheese straws, "whoever presides generally falls on guard against spilling tea on the embroidered cloth; but when one has it every afternoon, as I do, it doesn't pay to use fine white linen and delicate needlework to array the table. Yet one likes to have it attractive. I had two of my prettiest drawwork tea cloths badly spotted before I had the inspiration I wanted. Then I deliberately stained a Mt. White linen with the kind of tea I generally use and let it dry so. Then I took that tea stained bit and searched until I found a heavy linen of that precise tint. It was the old, twilled weave that you see, and I found the silks that harmonized with it for the simple drawwork spotted before I had the inspiration I wanted. Then I deliberately stained a Mt. White linen with the kind of tea I generally use and let it dry so. 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